Narrator: Claudia Goodwin
Interviewer: Sarah Stone
Date:
Location: Harkers Island, NC
Project: Down East Change

Sarah Stone 00:00
Okay, what is your name and where were you born? And where did you grow up? Like, where did you grow up in? What's your name?

Claudia Goodwin 00:11
My name is Claudia Goodwin I was born at Sea Level Hospital, but on my birth certificate, it has the hunting quarters on it. And I've lived in Cedar Island for the majority of my life. I lived in Atlantic a few years and I lived in Alaska for two years.

Sarah Stone 00:24
Yeah, so is your family from this area?

Claudia Goodwin 00:27
Yes, I am a traditional Downeaster. My family can be traced back forever from Cedar Island, Hog Island and Ocracoke.

Sarah Stone 00:27
So how would you describe the area of Down East to people outside of your community?

Claudia Goodwin 00:44
They're very unique. They're self-sufficient. Not as much so now as it was when I was growing up, but always trying to plan ahead and making sure that you're ready for anything that can happen especially like hurricanes, or weather.

Sarah Stone 01:05
Can you describe the natural environment Down East and what you value about it?

Claudia Goodwin 01:11
The beauty of it? Um, how clean it is, compared to other areas. It is really beautiful down there.

Sarah Stone 01:20
Yes. How has your relationship been like with your local environment since you moved to Down East?

Claudia Goodwin 01:30
Very good. I've worked on the water as a youth; I've gone shrimping with my father. I started in sixth grade, and work right on up till I was in college. When I was on a shrimp boat, I would clam and muck fish. And then I

worked we had a hotel on Cedar Island which is closed now called the Driftwood. We were there the majority, there was plenty of jobs for youth when I was growing up. Contrary to now, there's not a lot of jobs for young people. Down East like there was when I grew up, people could go work at the fish houses. They could work at a different restaurant or hotels, there was more work available then. And there was more things for us to do as teenagers, but I don't see that for teenagers now. Like I used to.

Sarah Stone 02:18
Yeah I know, a couple of my friends work at like fish houses and stuff, but many of them haven't been able to find jobs where they would like. Can you describe any culturally or historically significant places in nature Down East? Like anywhere that holds like significance to you?

Claudia Goodwin 02:40
Yes, um, it's disappeared now. But there used to be a clubhouse on the island. This is just a shoal now called the Harbor Island Clubhouse. And it was at one time a very big hunting lodge. And now they have the Hog Island one. And I think the fishing is culturally important and hunting. As a teenager, again, I'll bring up the Driftwood. There was nights, we would have over 200 hunters there that we would feed. And there was so many people coming down to the area and the fishing was always unreal. When I would go out on the fishing boat there would be close to 200 to 300 boats out there at night shrimp and now you don't see that.

Sarah Stone 03:27
How has your trade changed over the years? So like when you worked on the shrimp boat? Or like when you were fishing a lot. How has that changed over the years? Like I know there's a decrease of people being able to go out, especially with like the prices going up on gas and everything else.

Claudia Goodwin 03:51
I promised my parents that I would go to college. And so I went to college, and I married a boy, a guy from home. And so we knew that to work on the water. It was they were not getting high prices. And even at that time in the ’80s. The price of shrimp is still the same price as probably what they get today. So I knew I had to work and mostly when I first started teaching, I mostly worked to make sure that we can get our insurance paid. And so my career, this is my 34th year of teaching in North Carolina. I did retire in 2017 and took a couple years off and then went and worked out in this Alaska village in the Kuskokwim district. And I've seen a lot of similarities.

Sarah Stone 04:47
Yeah, what did you do in Alaska?

Claudia Goodwin 04:48
I was a teacher. I was one room schoolhouse in 12 block and then I went to Aniak and taught there; that's a little bit bigger village

Sarah Stone 04:59
I didn't know like one room schools were like a thing still.

Claudia Goodwin 05:01
Yes, we had Pre-K through 12th grade in one school. The village only had about 100 people in it, was all Native Americans.

Sarah Stone 05:10
So do you know what a ghost forest is?

Claudia Goodwin 05:14
Are you talking about where?

Sarah Stone 05:16
Like the dead tree?

Claudia Goodwin 05:18
Yeah and like, like what we see on the shore side? Yes, yes. We have those Cedar Island.

Sarah Stone 05:22
Yes, they're all over the place on your drive down.

Claudia Goodwin 05:26
Yes, so if you go and look in there, you'll see where people used to have houses you will see bricks from the chimneys still there.

Sarah Stone 05:40
So basically, they're caused mostly by either like the water coming in and flooding and causing the roots to uproot. And so do you have any solutions to the idea?

Claudia Goodwin 05:55
I think may, I know I see that Lola Road on Cedar island I wonder if this—the state could come in and block it—you know, put in like a barrier to keep it from washing away any more than what it is?

Sarah Stone 06:10
Yeah, that's the same thing that I said when they first came to me with these questions. I was like a sea wall, maybe it would help maybe with some of the flooding.

Claudia Goodwin 06:18
I don't know if that would stop it or make it flood more because if you stop and look where people's put sea walls, that it's like the beach disappears after a while so it's—

Sarah Stone 06:27

it's a temporary solution. So thinking back over the years, have you ever experienced a hurricane or other event that made you afraid for life?

Claudia Goodwin 06:37
I've never left Cedar Island during a hurricane unless I weren't there. If I was in Alaska, Isabel I have no—first, Denis hit my house twice. And we redone the house. The house I originally owned was built in the ’30s. That house was damaged during the ’33 storm by the former owner; it was pushed back to where it was. So when my husband and I purchased that—my husband is deceased now, I'm widowed. We renovated the house when Denis came and got us and then turned around come back and got us. So we had just redone the house, then Isabel come and it destroyed the house. The water was chest high in my house and it nodded off the blocks and when it fell it broke all the way around us. And I don't know. I don't think I was ever scared; I think I was just devastated knowing that there was no way we would be able to rebuild it again. And the worst part about hurricanes living on Cedar Island is you can't get on and off. You can die on the island which I will say I have drove a truck across that road that was flooded and water coming over the hood of my truck which was very dangerous. But when the water gets ready to recede it leaves, and it leaves quick; it takes everything with it most of the time.

Sarah Stone 08:04
Did Florence or Dorian have any major impacts?

Claudia Goodwin 08:08
I was living in Atlantic during Florence, and yes, we went with, was almost two weeks no electricity. That's when Ocracoke got destroyed so bad and that's when you still see your communities come together they help everybody out.

Sarah Stone 08:22
Yeah. Couple of my friends and I went to help a little bit.

Claudia Goodwin 08:28
Yeah, it's very tragic.

Sarah Stone 08:35
Did a hurricane change the way you see your home community or Down East in general?

Claudia Goodwin 08:40
Yes, I moved to higher ground. I made sure that we're not going to be living in that because I had a lot of life changes. That where I'm at right now does not flood. Or if I am going to be in a flood zone the house is going to be built pretty high.

Sarah Stone 08:59
Yeah, thinking about the future, what do you hope your community will look like in 50 to 100 years?

Claudia Goodwin 09:07
I hope it stays a lot like it is. I don't want to see the big condominiums come in. I don't want to see the big corporations coming in and take over, but I know that's probably gonna happen. I know that the taxes is going up so high that soon locals and even people like me who will soon be retired won't be able to afford the taxes or house insurance. I mean, the housing insurances on our homes now is ridiculous and of course it is going to go up, and that's going to hurt a lot of the locals that are living on a fixed income.

Sarah Stone 09:46
Do you know of anyone in the community is like trying to make changes to help prevent that?

Claudia Goodwin 09:52
I know that they've had meetings at the Core Sound Museum that tried to keep the homeowners insurance from going up so high.

Sarah Stone 10:05
Is there anything else you'd like to add that we haven't touched on today?

Claudia Goodwin 10:10
No, I think I've really think we have a unique culture. And I know everything cannot stay the same. But I do think in the past, we used to have a local history that was taught in the schools in the middle schools that was done. And we would go and do field trips and stuff. But I think everybody concentrates so much now on and of course test and get through everything, that sometimes we forget our local history and doing some of the side field trips that we used to do. And maybe the lower grades are doing it, because I'm in the high school now. I was in the middle school for 26 years now. I've been in the high school since then.

Sarah Stone 10:51
Yeah, how have the, these environmental changes impacted the school system or how you teach in the classroom?

Claudia Goodwin 11:03
Um, well, one good thing that I don't know if it's good or bad. Now that, when we do have weather changes, we don't have to keep make up the days; we're able to do a little bit virtually. I think sometimes people don't realize that the electricity goes off. Kids don't have access to internet. And I do think that we rely way too much on computers and the internet.

Sarah Stone 11:29
So several interviewees have discussed the impacts of Hurricane Florence on the focus, emotional state and learning of their children. Did you notice any of these changes in your students after Florence?

Claudia Goodwin 11:41

I was retired at that time. And, but I did come back to help teachers out. We were out for a couple of weeks, two to three. I do know that they have seen it. I know other schools, for example, like Jones County seen it more than we did because their school got devastated. So this children were out longer than we were.

Sarah Stone 12:06
Okay, do you have any recommendations for anyone else? Anyone else that I should speak with?

Claudia Goodwin 12:13
Have you talked to, I think the you've talked to Mr. Kittrell.

Sarah Stone 12:17
I'm talking to him tomorrow.

Claudia Goodwin 12:18
Okay. Miss Morgan. I have not talked to her. Margo has been teaching. We're about the same age. So you would get the heart she's from Harkers Island, so she would know how everything that affected them. Florence affected us really bad. Isabel got Cedar Island itself river really bad. And people were kind because we're such a small community. But there was a lot of homes destroyed in Sea Level and Cedar Island. And Wilson, during Isabel and South River, I had a lot of disaster. They had a lot of homes destroyed there.

Sarah Stone 12:57
Down East is just like a such low place that it's really easy for a hurricane just come.

Claudia Goodwin 13:02
It is, and when it hits, it's devastating. But it's those hours of waiting. But that's when you see the community like come together And the community does come together. I mean, very much so that's each community has some fire department and the fire departments are the people that really help everybody, you know.

Sarah Stone 13:25
Yeah, like I'm from Beaufort, and I've just started to kind of like, I think it was last year. So my first time ever going Down East and now that I have like friends down there, like they're the most sweetest people and, if my car breaks down the side road I know they would stop and help me.

Claudia Goodwin 13:42
Yes, yes.

Sarah Stone 13:44
Okay, well, thank you for doing this.

Claudia Goodwin 13:45
You're very welcome.